

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1838

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

COMIDEASTFOR

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

USCINCEUR VAIHINGENNOER

C O N F I D E N T I A L MUSCAT 0164

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: MARR UK MU

SUBJECT: PLANS FOR RAF WITHDRAWAL FROM SALALAH

1. IN FEBRUARY 15 CONVERSATION, UK AIR ATTACHE CONFIRMED THAT RAF WILL WITHDRAW COMPLETELY FROM SALALAH. RAF HAS RUN THAT AIR-FIELD FOR MANY YEARS, BUT IN TERMS OF HMG INTERESTS THERE IS LITTLE JUSTIFICATION FOR CONTINUING TO DO SO. OMANGOV HAS AGREED TO PLAN, ALTHOUGH THERE IS STILL SOME QUESTION ABOUT TIMING. RAF WOULD LIKE TO AIM FOR OCTOBER 1976 WITHDRAWAL; OMANIS ARE PRESSING FOR SOMEWHAT LATER DATE.

2. RAF UNITS WILL BE PULLED BACK TO UK, HENCE REDUCING OVERALL LEVEL OF DIRECT UK MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO OMAN. HOWEVER, BASIC DECISION REVOLVES AROUND HMG DESIRE TO CUT EXPENSES RATHER THAN MORE STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS. (CCONTRARILY, OMANGOV WANTS TO PROLONG BRITISH FUNDING FOR RUNNING SALALAH

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AIRPORT FOR AS LONG AS POSSIBLE.)

3. SOAF (WHICH IS ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY OFFICERED BY BRITISH OFFICERS EITHER ON CONTRACT OR SECONDMENT) WILL CONTINUE TO OPERATE OUT OF SALALAH.

4. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH SALALAH FREQUENTLY USED TO LAUNCH MISSIONS DURING DHOFAR WAR, COMPLETION OF ALL-WEATHER FACILITY AT MIDWAY MADE THIS LESS IMPORTANT FACTOR TOWARDS END OF CAMPAIGN. HENCE, ONLY PERCEIVED MILITARY IMPLICATION OF PLANNED WITHDRAWAL IS IN REDUCTION OF OVERALL BRITISH STRENGTH HERE.
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